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The average distance travelled by each passenger in Belgium, is stated to have been $7\frac{3}{4}$ leagues, or about 19 miles. Mr. Laing computes the average distance in this country at $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This shows us the comparative cheapness of fares in Belgium, where passengers are conveyed on the average 19 miles for 1s. $4\frac{1}{2}d.$, while in England the average fare is 2s. $2\frac{3}{4}d.$ for $13\frac{1}{2}$ miles. This difference results in great part from the much larger proportion of travellers who in that country use the cheapest class of carriage.

In Belgium there was in use in 1842, 1 mile of railway for every 14,601 inhabitants, the proportion in the United Kingdom having been 1 mile for 12,630 inhabitants.

The number of passengers in proportion to the length of railways was, for each mile 9695 passengers in Belgium, and 11,098 in this kingdom.

The total receipts for each mile were,—

	In Belgium.	In the United Kingdom.
	£.	£.
From Passengers	664	1,471
From Goods	394	674
	<u>1,058</u>	<u>2,145</u>

The gross receipts, in proportion to cost, are therefore found to be, in Belgium $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and in this kingdom $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

Observations on Certain Passages in the Report of the Irish Census Commissioners. By HENRY HALLAM, Esq., F.R.S., one of the Trustees of the Society.

[Read before the Statistical Society of London, 15th April, 1844.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Wilton Crescent, March 14, 1844.

THE late Report of the Census Commissioners for Ireland contains so rich a harvest of facts interesting to the lover of statistical inquiries, and gives such proofs of labour and diligence in those by whom it has been compiled, that it becomes more important to point out any casual inaccuracy that may have crept into it, than in a less authorized publication, or one less likely to be of enduring reputation. I shall, therefore, make no apology for troubling the Society with a few observations on one part of the Report.

In page 42 a table is given, “exhibiting,” the Commissioners say, “the tendency to marriage at different ages, for the entire kingdom, in the towns and in the country.” It is headed, “Proportion unmarried of 100 of the population of the respective ages;” and these ages are arranged in five columns. The proportion above mentioned does not refer to the entire population, though it is rather equivocally worded, but to that of each age respectively. And it is inferred by the Commissioners, that “as to males, 7 per cent. in the country and 13 per cent. in the towns are married at 25 years of age; and that, as might be expected, the greatest proportion of men marry between the ages of 26 and 35.” It is observed afterwards, that “females marry earlier than males; accordingly it will be seen by the table that 19 per cent. in the country and 21 per cent. in the towns are married at the age of 25.”

That less than one-tenth of the male adult population (that is, above

the age of 17), and only one-fifth of the female, should be married by the time they attain the age of 25, is so contrary to the experience of almost every country, and especially to all that which we have heard of the habits of the Irish people, that when I first read a *précis* of the Report in the last number of the Statistical Journal, I was exceedingly staggered by this statement, and have endeavoured to trace the origin of what seemed to be an evident mistake. One source of error is obvious on the face of the table in the Report; namely, that it confounds the average ratio of married persons to the living population within a period of several years, that is, between the ages of 17 and 25, with the simple ratio of such persons to that population in the last year of the period. It might be, that among a large number of females between the ages of 17 and 25, only one-fifth are actually married; but it would be a singular inference that no greater proportion of those who have just reached the latter age are so.

It is to be observed, also, that the proportion of married persons to the population of any given age does not give us the average age of contracting matrimony; because a considerable portion of the population die without marrying at all. Yet the Commissioners seem to draw inferences from their table as to the average age of matrimony among those who do actually contract it.

I have taken the pains to calculate the mean age of matrimony in Ireland from the table in the Appendix to the Report, p. lxxvi. According to the general summary of all marriages contracted in Ireland for 11 years, from 1830 to 1840, the whole number is 545,849; but of these 39,197 males and 23,644 females have no ages specified. Deducting these, we have 506,752 males and 522,205 females. Now 44,267 marriages of the former sex appear to have been contracted under 20 years of age, being 8·7 per cent. of the whole, and, including of course these, 209,931 under 25; being 41·3 per cent. of the whole. Among females, we shall find 153,312 under 20, being 29·4, and 363,070, being 69·7, of the whole number under 25 years of age. The inference is, that the mean age of matrimony with men is about the 27th, and with women about the 23rd year of life. I have not adverted to second marriages, which would make the mean point a little earlier, but for which no great allowance need be made at that period of life. Yet the Report says, "the next period, from 26 to 35, is the age at which the greatest number of marriages takes place, as well among women as men." The tables in the Appendix give 221,880 marriages among men, or about 44 per cent. for this period, which is certainly greater than in the preceding; but among women we find only 133,277, or about 25·2 per cent. It seems impossible to reconcile these tables with the shorter one in the body of the Report, p. 42, and the former are surely entitled to more regard.

This discrepancy might be explained if the tables in the Appendix should prove to be compiled from other sources than those on which the Report has relied. The mean age of marriage, as deduced from the Appendix, appears to be rather earlier, at least among women, than in England; but this is only agreeable to what we have always heard, and is what we shall more readily receive, than so extraordinary a lateness of marriage as the Report would lead us to suppose.

The Report contains a table, "showing the general results of the

branches of vital statistics, births, marriages, and deaths, in the ratio which they bear to the community. It will be seen that the births average one to three, which is so near the result obtained in other countries, as to make it probable that they are very near the truth. The marriages are obviously much too few, being by the table only 1 to 181; whereas they can scarcely be, in reality, less than 1 to 128. The deaths we have already shown, from other sources, to be in defect about one-fourth." It is afterwards observed that "these results can only be considered as approximations. The returns are incomplete, and the causes of fluctuation are so numerous and so uncertain, that we abstain from various interesting deductions which the subject invites; still trusting that these tables, as well as those on vital statistics generally, will be found to afford, even in their present state, much curious material to the general statist," p. 51.

I should be sorry to dispute what is so modestly urged; yet I cannot help observing, that while it is most true that, in statistics, we must often satisfy ourselves with approximations, it seems an extensive use of that word to cover errors of 25 or 30 per cent. The deaths and marriages, as the Report admits, are in defect, at least, to that degree. The returns of births, the Commissioners hope, "are very near the truth, since they average one to three, which is near the result obtained in other countries." I can annex no meaning to births averaging one to three, and after much consideration, can only presume it to be a mis-print. It certainly does not relate to the ratio of births to marriages, which is greater than three to one in every entire country known to us, though it may be less in particular localities. In fact, the calculation of births made in the Report, p. 40, compared with the table of marriages, would give considerably more than four births to a marriage, perhaps as high a figure as 4·6, which is that of Belgium. But as the marriages in Ireland are supposed by the Commissioners to be very defectively returned, we cannot rely at all upon this. Yet the age of marriage in Ireland appears to be rather earlier than in England, and general opinion does not favour the notice of any peculiar curse of barrenness on Irish women. We find, indeed, a startling assertion in a note to p. 12 of the Report, that the average number of children in an Irish family is considerably lower than in a Scotch or English one, "in accordance with the well known law, that the most marrying race have the lowest cypher of fecundity." But as we cannot possibly admit that such a law is well known, or see the slightest ground for believing it to be a law of nature at all, it seems much more reasonable to presume error in the particular tables from which this assertion is derived. It is evident that if the number of living children in Irish families were to those in English or Scotch only as 2·34 to 3, we must account for it by some extraordinary mortality in the first years of life, nothing of which has been reported, and it would be inconsistent with the rate of increase of Irish population, which, in the judgment of the Commissioners, has not been less during the last decennial period than before, though, through the effects of emigration, it has not shown itself so favourably in the Census.

I am, dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

HENRY HALLAM.

J. Fletcher, Esq.,
&c. &c.